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Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 INRE-00 NSCE-00 SAB-01 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 ACDA-05 AID-05 OMB-01 SAJ-01 EUR-12

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O R 011625Z NOV 75
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
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INFO USIA WASHDC
AMEMBASSY PANAMA
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USIA FOR ILA

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: VE OGEN
SUBJECT: VENEZUELAN PRESIDENT'S REACTION TO CARL ROWAN INTERVIEW

REF: CARACAS 11360

1. IN LENGTHY RELEASE FROM VENEZUELAN PRESIDENTIAL PRESS OFFICE PUBLISHED NOVEMBER 1, FOLLOWING MAJOR POINTS WERE MADE:

A. THE PRESIDENT'S INTERVIEW WITH CARL ROWAN HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH TORRIJOS PRIVATE VISIT NOR DID IT OCCUR DURING THE VISIT. (IN FACT, IT OCCURRED THE SAME NIGHT AFTER TORRIJOS HAD LEFT).

B. PRESIDENT PEREZ EXPRESSED FRANKLY THE DEEP LATIN AMERICAN CONCERN, AND THAT OF THE GOV IN PARTICULAR, ON THE COURSE OF U.S.-PANAMANIAN NEGOTIATIONS. THE PRESIDENT HAS THE OBJECTIVE IMPRESSION THAT THE CONVERSATIONS ARE NOT PROGRESSING WHILE TIME
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IS RUNNING DANGEROUSLY FOR THE GOOD RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO

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AMERICAS. HE REITERATED WHAT HE HAD SAID ON A NUMBER OF PREVIOUS OCCASIONS CONCERNING THE DANGER OF AN OUTBREAK OF VIOLENCE WHEN PANAMANIAN PATIENCE BECOMES CONVINCED THAT THEIR RIGHTS OF SOVEREIGNTY OVER THE CANAL ZONE WILL NOT BE RECOGNIZED.

C. THE PRESIDENT COMMENTED THAT, FROM VARIOUS SOURCES INCLUDING INTERNATIONAL PRESS AGENCY REPORTS ON SPEECHES AND PUBLIC STATEMENTS OF GOP REPRESENTATIVES, HIGH OFFICIALS OF USG AND IN COMMENTARY OF INTERNATIONAL COLUMNISTS, HE DEDUCED THAT RIGHT OF PANAMA TO FULL SOVEREIGNTY OVER AN ESSENTIAL PART OF ITS TERRITORY WHICH DIVIDES THE COUNTRY IN TWO IS STILL BEING DEBATED OR IS DENIED.

D. THE PRESIDENT EXPRESSED HIS CONCERN OVER THE NEWS THAT THE U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IN THE CANAL ZONE, FAR FROM BEING REDUCED, IS BEING REVITALIZED AND COMPLEMENTED BY MANEUVERS UNUSUAL IN OTHER TIMES. PRESIDENT PEREZ ASKED HIMSELF, "COULD IT BE THAT DEFENSIVE STANDS ARE BEING PREPARED TO FACE PRESUMED OR POSSIBLE REACTIONS ON THE PART OF PANAMANIANS?" THIS WOULD MEAN, SIMPLY, THAT THERE IS NO DECISION TO ARRIVE AT AN AGREEMENT FOR A NEW TREATY WHICH WOULD DEFINITIVELY CLOSE THIS CHAPTER OF HEMISPHERIC HISTORY. HE REFERRED TO STATEMENTS OF SECRETARY KISSINGER ALLUDING TO A VIETNAM-TYPE SITUATION IN THE EVENT NEGOTIATIONS SHOULD FAIL AND THOSE OF AMBASSADOR BUNKER THAT WITHOUT AN AGREEMENT THE U.S. WOULD SEE ITSELF INVOLVED IN HOSTILITIES WITH PANAMA.

E. THE PRESIDENT ALSO REMINDED THE COLUMNIST OF THE SESQUICENTENNIAL MEETING OF THE AMPHYTIONIC CONGRESS OF PANAMA AND OF THE BICENTENNIAL OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION. THE PRESIDENT COMMENTED THAT IT WOULD BE DISHEARTENING AND AN OMEN OF BAD TIMES FOR U.S.-LATIN AMERICAN RELATIONS IF THESE TWO GREAT EVENTS OCCURRED IN THE PRESENCE OF A COLONIAL ENCLAVE IN THE HEART OF LATIN AMERICA AND SUSTAINED PRECISELY BY THE GREAT NATION THAT WAS THE FIRST TO FIGHT AND GIVE THE EXAMPLE AGAINST COLONIALISM IN OUR CONTINENT.

2. THE GOV RELEASE ENDED BY SAYING PRESIDENT PEREZ EXPRESSED HIS CONFIDENCE IN THE DECISIONS OF THE U.S. FOR ITS
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UNDERSTANDING WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF PANAMA IN ARRIVING IN A DECOROUS AND SATISFACTORY SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF THE CANAL. HE THEN SUGGESTED THAT IF THE U.S. SINCERELY DESIRED TO FORTIFY DEMOCRACY IN LATIN AMERICA, EXAMPLES SUCH AS THAT OF THE CANAL ZONE WOULD NOT CONTRIBUTE TO THIS PURPOSE AND WOULD, IN FACT, SERVE TO STIMULATE THE ADVANCE OF COMMUNIST IDEOLOGY WHICH IS EXPRESSED FROM CUBA AS THE DEFENDER OF THE SOVEREIGN RIGHTS OF EACH OF OUR COUNTRIES.

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3. ENGLISH-LANGUAGE DAILY JOURNAL SAYS IN ITS COVERAGE THAT SOURCES REPORT GOV MINISTER OF INFORMATION WENT TO PANAMA ON THURSDAY AND THAT FOREIGN MINISTER ESCOVAR SALOM JOINED HIM FRIDAY. ACCORDING TO THE STORY, FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS CLAIMED THAT ESCOVAR ONLY MADE A STOPOVER IN PANAMA ON HIS WAY TO GUATEMALA. WHEN ASKED ABOUT THE PURPOSE OF ESCOVAR'S GUATEMALA TRIP, THE SOURCE SAID, "I SUPPOSE IT HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE PANAMA CANAL." UNIVERSAL LEADS ITS FRONT PAGE WITH REPORT THAT ESCOVAR SALOM LEFT FOR PANAMA AND GUATEMALA IN A DEFENSE MINISTRY AIRCRAFT AND THAT ACCORDING TO SOURCES HIS VISIT WAS RELATED TO THE VENEZUELAN VISIT OF TORRIJOS LAST WEDNESDAY. ANOTHER PRESS ACCOUNT INDICATED THE FOREIGN MINISTER DID MAKE A "TECHNICAL" STOP IN PANAMA ON HIS WAY TO THE CHIEFS OF STATE MEETING IN GUATEMALA.
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